



News From Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis 32nd Congressional District of California

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SOLIS VOTES AGAINST DR-CAFTA

Calls CAFTA's Passage a "Defeat for America's Working Families"

WASHINGTON, DC- Today, Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis (CA-32), the only Member of Congress of Central American descent, voted against the Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA). The agreement was approved narrowly by a vote of 217 – 215.

"Like NAFTA, CAFTA will lead to more job losses, decreased wages and increased immigration. While President Bush and the multi-national corporations claim victory today, working families in the United States and Central America are the real losers of CAFTA," said Solis.

Solis voted against DR-CAFTA because it lacks strong labor and environmental standards and will result in job losses for American workers and the exploitation of Central American workers. The 32nd Congressional District of California has lost nearly 1,000 jobs as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). These losses include: 127 jobs at the Honeywell Corporation in El Monte, 63 jobs at Veriflex Corporation in Irwindale, nearly 500 jobs between Jerome Fashions and Jowett Garments in South El Monte, Elca Fashion in El Monte, and more than 110 jobs in Covina.

The U.S. Senate approved the trade agreement by a vote of 54 – 45 on June 30, 2005. To be enacted, the President must sign the trade agreement.

Below is the statement given by Congresswoman Solis on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives on July 27, 2005, urging her colleagues to oppose CAFTA.

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Congressional Record, July 27, 2005

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank our ranking member for yielding me this time, and I thank the Members in the House tonight.

I have to tell the Members that, as a proud member of Congress, the only Member of Congress of Nicaraguan descent, I am proud to say that my mother just returned from Nicaragua. The news was not a happy sound at all. Poverty, yes, is very bad. The people there are looking for leadership in the U.S. House of Representatives. They are asking us to vote down CAFTA because they know that the government there does not realize that the people there have been suffering for over 40 years. And to this day, they are looking

for Members in the House to provide support so that people there can have dignity and respect.

Why is it that we can pass an agreement like this that does not allow for people in those countries, in El Salvador and Nicaragua and Costa Rica, to collectively bargain? Why is it in El Salvador two people who were trying to organize were shot to death in front of their houses? Why is it that we have to stand up and allow for that disgrace to occur when this country is so rich and so wealthy that we cannot provide other types of aid and assistance so that people can be empowered to do what they choose to do, to build their houses, to have dignity, to have health care?

What we are doing and are proposing tonight is that the pharmaceutical companies would take away very important medical assistance to people who are dying of HIV and AIDS in Guatemala. How dare we decide the destiny of people in Guatemala by saying we are going to raise the price of medicine for them and for their children. Yes, they are going to want to come to this country because do the Members know why? We are cutting them off at the knees.

And as a proud member of the Hispanic Caucus, 14 members, a majority of that caucus, voted against DR-CAFTA.

We need to go back to the table. We need to have more transparency. We need to stand up for those young women who are going to be drawn into those jobs, who are going to be abused, who are currently being abused even in Mexico.

I would just like to tell the Members that in Mexico, where my father was raised, in the area of Ciudad Juarez, the people who were attracted to those jobs were ages 14 to 20 years old. These are young women who were drawn into the maquiladores. They are the same type of individuals that we have drawn into these types of factories that will work in El Salvador and Nicaragua. Right now there are some free trade zones there. The people that I see lining up for those jobs are 14 and 16 years of age, working 12 hours a day, in an encampment where they are not even allowed to go to the restroom without having permission.

We do not need DR-CAFTA. Please vote for humanity, for respect for the people of Latin America and Central America. I stand tall with the Democratic Party.

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